

Transcript Summary

UAF Oral History Call No:	2016-15-06
Date of Recording:	1955
Length of Recording:	00:13:46
Original Media:	Dictabelts (red)
Digitized By:	Northeast Document Conservation Centre using IRENE method
Digitization Date:	December 2024
Narrator:	Clyde 'Slim' Williams
Interviewer:	It would appear that Richard 'Dick' Morenus gave Slim Williams the Dictabelt recorder and Slim is just telling stories into the machine by himself. Dick is not on the recording at all.
Others Present:	N/A
Recording Location:	Chicago, Illinois
Transcriber:	Leslie McCartney
Transcription Date:	December 13, 2024
Access:	The dictabelts were donated to us by the great-nephew of Dick Morenus who inherited them from his mother (Dick's niece). Slim and his wife never had children so there is no next of kin. We have a signed Letter of Transmittal on file from Dick's great-nephew. For public/electronic use.
Where to Find this in Text:	These recordings were made by Clyde 'Slim' Williams so that Richard 'Dick' Morenus could write Slim's story in book form. It was published as <i>Alaska Sourdough, the Story of Slim Williams</i> by Richard Morenus (1956). New York: Rand McNally & Company. The book is available on Internet Archive https://archive.org/details/alaskasourdoughs0000rich/mode/2up or in the Elmer E. Ramuson Library, F909.M75 Alaska Collection. Where possible, the pages of where some of the transcribed stories appear in the book are noted.

(00:00:00)

Slim Williams: Laid out another line comin' back and build a cabin and lean-to at the other end so it was all fixed up. It had been pretty near a month since I'd come up or since I'd started trappin' and I figured I could use one more day and I decided I'd go down river, just to see what things looked like and now hurry, no anything. Well when I went out to hook up that morning and I had a little light sled and 22

inches wide but only about 7 foot long, had a big sled from my freight, and went to drive the old leader because I, it had been a long time since the pup had come up river and didn't think he would follow the trail. So, I started after when we hook up my old leader and he acted awfully funny. He, generally he was so anxious to go but this morning he just didn't seem to want to go at all. And I'm kinda screwy about anything like that. When a dog acts like he don't wanna go, especially the leader, why it just make me think a lot that's all there is to it. Can't help it. It may be screwy but I just can't help that, just feeling that way. But the pup, he was plumb ready to go.

00:01:17

So I just hooked up my five living dogs to the little light sled, started down river, I got to where I'd come in and spoke to the pup and he took right off on the trail, no sign of it at all, it has snowed and blowed, river was hard, good goin' and gee, he just took that trail and he kept it like an old dog you know and boy I was proud of that little leader. I was just tickled pink, that's all there was to it 'cuz I just didn't think that he'd do it and he made about five miles I guess. He just joggin' along, maybe eight, ten miles an hour and I was just enjoying it and the pups was too and he travellin' right close to the bank and turned a little corner and there was two moose. A cow and calf and boy did things happen in about two seconds and half. They was about 150 yards ahead of me when I first seen 'em and they started [inaudible] was in the lead and boy he was just a [inaudible] and the old cow behind with her long ugly trot you know and she would swing her head first one side, look back you know and seemed to kinda enjoy it too. Why I just turned the pups loose. I didn't never pay no att ... I just let 'em go. Kept me pretty busy keepin' right end up on that sled because we was makin' time I'll tell ya. It just seemed to me that I was hittin' the snow and just about once every ten feet. We wasn't gainin' any on the moose at all, you could just ... I figured pretty soon I'd slow up and let the moose go [inaudible] and let the dogs have their fun and about that time I see the cow and calf both fall, just went down flat. Whop I said, glare ice. Well by the time I'd realized that, and the moose would get on their feet again, I wasn't over 50 yards, I kinda stepped on the brake just a little to kinda, so I wouldn't throw the sled out of balance and over tip me the dogs too and just slowed 'em up slow and by the time we hit the ice why the moose was gone doin' fine again, slippin' course, but not bad and the dogs went to slippin' a little too but not bad and about that time my sled hit the ice and I had no break. I just wore it smooth up in them mountains and I was just as helpless on that ice as anything you ever seen. Well, I stuck my feet out both sides and slid 'em, I had moccasins on, that held me back a little bit, a little slippery on the pups too and I was doin' everything I could to slow the pups, I know there was no use speak to 'em 'cuz they just won't mind me, old dog would mind me, I knew they wouldn't and about that time I see I big splash and the moose disappeared. Boy, they'd went into an air hole. Well, so I couldn't hold 'em and I thought well gee I'd tip my sled over.

00:04:18

Maybe some will hold that. I tip my sled on one side, had the rifle in the bottom of the sled and piece of canvas and that rifle just slid out of that sled and away it went a skiddin' across the ice you know. I was still a goin' no stoppin' it didn't help a bit that thing on it's side and I was gettin' awful close that air hole I'm tellin' ya. Well I saw it and there was just no chance to save my dogs and I figured better to save me than nothin' so I just left the sled, right on my belly, my hands out in front of me which I'd had on since [inaudible] gloves, mittens, and they held pretty good on the ice. I pressed down hard and I stopped not four feet from that air hole. Well, I just looked up in time and in my excitement and fright to see my sled go under the ice, the calf had already gone under. And the cow as right on the other side. Well just a big whorl around and like there generally is in those big air holes and the moose is on the other side comin' a right around towards me in that current when she soon caught up to me and I never seen such eyes on an animal in my life, boy their were either, I don't know if it was fright or what it was but she did look

awful. She seemed to kinda turn like she wanted to come towards me. And her hips kinda swung under the ice and she was ... Well there I was, about four feet from that water and it begin to slope down right there and well I was just scared so bad.

00:05:55

You know a man don't think in a case of that kind of, some men say how much they thought and all about what they gonna do and well I never do that. I would just scared. Period. And without thinkin' I just reached back and got my sheath and got my sheath and I stuck it in the ice in front of me and I shoved my other hand back and I moved. I done it again and I moved again. Well I think I'd backed up 25 feet away from that water before I dare even turn around. Then I turn around and got on my hands and knees and I crawled to the rifle. Boy was that somethin' to get a hold of that rifle. It just seemed to help a lot I'm tellin' ya. Well I sat there and got all shaky, got scared then. That's the way I always do when anythings happen, I get scared long time after there's nothing to get scared about. But finally I got on my feet and started back towards home. Well that's the longest distance I'd ever travelled from there home. I'll tell you it was long. Course it was crushed and not bad. Well I got home and that old leader was just tickled to death that's all there was to it, I never seen ... he commenced to whine before I got in a quarter of mile of the house and he just pawed and jumped and he was the ticklest dog I ever seen. Well I'm tellin' ya I just wasn't tickled at all. I went into that cabin and I just come out feedin' the dogs. I didn't go on the trap line for two days. I just the worst beat man you ever seen and just had too much trap line, and that's all there was to it. Just more than I could work. And, had to rid of some of it so I cut my trap line down to four days and went on trappin'. But boy that just about the closest I ever come to loosing my pedro anyplace and I just don't want it to happen again either. [dead air from 00:07:50 to 00:07:59]

00:07:59

Now that dude is just another one of those know it alls, screwballs that you just run acrossed everyday that man Olsen. If he wants see squalor, disease, rags everything else, let 'em go to some of the western reservations where the do-gooders ever since the White Man come here has been takin' care of the Indians. You really see it here. The Eskimo is bein' done everything too possible to make 'im what he shouldn't be and those kinda people are the ones that will do it. If you do that little woman up there, if you just give her one hundred part of the money that this screwball wants to take care of those Eskimos, she'll do a hundred times better. Now I don't know her, I have no idea who she is and never heard of her but she's some traders wife some school teacher or some missionary and she's gone up there and found out what lovely people those are, how honest, everything and she's just tryin' to protect her ... it's a shame that such people as that can't be listened to. Now, we'll just take the Eskimo as I have seen. Now in one generation he been jerked from an igloo, sod house or dug out up to an ice box and a radio and all of that stuff. In less than one generation think of that. And what has been done, now there's good missionaries and bad missionaries. I've hauled missionaries for days through over hard trails and everything else to get 'em to the villages and then again I've blocked some too from keep 'em from goin'.

00:09:53

Their not all good, now just as all the traders are not good. But we'll take their religion for instance. Now the Catholic come up there and he'll tell the Indians they mustn't eat meat on Friday. Any other day is alright. The Advent is come up and oh, you mustn't eat meat at all. The Protestants come up there and say oh eat anything, anytime all except that stomach, don't eat that, that is wrong, oh you mustn't eat that. Well that's what kept them people alive for ever since the year they come there. And they must do it. As far as unnourished children and that, it's the White Man that's all. Now 90% of the Eskimo and

Indian in the north are TB and syphilitic. The White Man brought it to 'em, they've had no way of doin' anything about it and they've still got it. If that screwball wants to do it anything now they can cure TB and syphilis let 'em send doctors up there and get it taken care of. [dead air from 00:10:57 to 00:11:06]

00:11:06

Look at Little Nabesna Tommy, three little children there that he wanted to raise right and he was so anxious about those children. He wanted to raise 'em to be Gods people. He listened to the missionary and his father had taught him his religion. What did he do? Crook his toe on the trigger and blowed his head off so he could go and see which was right. Then he'd come back and teach his children. I have seen brothers sellin' their sisters on the streets because they're just all mixed up, they don't know any better. We have taught 'em such screwball stuff according to them. Now the father and mother they will teach their child to be good people, good mothers, good hunters, be kind to the children, make everybody like 'em and that, if they're not good, why the Windigo will come and take their children off to the big flat country and make slaves of them all the rest of their lives. What do they do the White Man comes in and there is no Windigo, that' screwball, you're foolish don't listen to that kind of tripe here's the thing, listen to this Bible. Well, that gets 'em all mixed up. Then the trader will come in and unscrupulous trader. We have them. There's some good ones and some bad ones same as everything else. And they'll ask this trader, they don't know who's missionary and who ain't and who's good and who's bad, everybody good with them. They're all good, they had their lives, they had their laws, they had their virtues and they believed in 'em, they listened to 'em, they was no such a thing as juvenile delinquency or crime or anything else there. Everybody was good. So they naturally thought that all the White People was good too. So the missionaries if it pleased them to them to tell 'em their religion was right they'd tell 'em, if it pleased 'em or to their advantage to tell 'em otherwise, why they'd tell 'em that, it didn't make any difference to them as long as they got the money and got some fur and made some money. It's just been pitiful bringin' those people from nothin' to tryin' to get 'em so fast. They old people would teach 'em one thing, the young ones learn another and it's just a mess. Now they talk about nothing to do up there. Let's just take the reindeer for instance. Now we've got reindeer, thousands and thousands of acres of reindeer range up there, they could be enough reindeer range there to make every Eskimo in the north rich [end of recording].